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U.S. Government renovates seven schools and one hospital in former LTTE-controlled areas of Eastern Province

Colombo, January 15, 2009 – To improve the lives of Sri Lankans affected by the conflict, the U.S. Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Pacific Command, is rehabilitating five schools in Trincomalee District and one hospital and two schools in Batticaloa District.

U.S. Government officials joined national, provincial and local education and health officials, community leaders, school and hospital staff, students and their families, and local residents this week for the official groundbreaking ceremonies to mark the beginning of the renovation and expansion projects in eight communities in Trincomalee and Batticaloa. All projects are scheduled to be completed by July 2009.

The buildings chosen for renovation provide essential social services to civilians whose lives have been repeatedly disrupted by armed hostilities for as long as two decades. In several of the communities, residents were displaced and not all have returned to the area.

“The U.S. Government is pleased to support the people of Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts whose lives have been disrupted by the conflict,” stated U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake. “In villages such as Amman Nagar and Arafa Nagar in Trincomalee District, and Pulipanjakal in Batticaloa District, some residents have not yet returned because they are waiting for the

schools to fully reopen. At other schools, such as Arasadithivu Vigneswara Vidyalayam in the Manmunai Southwest Division of Batticaloa, facilities are overcrowded because classrooms have been badly damaged or destroyed. And at the Navatkadu Hospital, facilities for in-patient care are extremely limited, making it difficult or impossible for community members to get the health care treatment they need close to home,” Blake continued.

With funding from the U.S. Pacific Command, part of the U.S. Department of Defense, USAID is rehabilitating these facilities as part of the U.S. Government’s humanitarian outreach to improve stability and quality of life in the region. Since 2003, USAID has supported more than 770 small-grant activities promoting community reconciliation and tsunami recovery in government-controlled areas of the country.

“USAID is pleased to partner with the U.S. Pacific Command to ensure these communities receive improved schools and health care facilities,” said USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn. “Altogether, we are constructing 64 new classrooms and renovating more than 13 damaged classrooms in seven schools, providing more space for hundreds of students and their teachers. And, building three new wards at the Navatkadu Hospital will ensure there are 63 beds to take care of local residents when they need medical attention,” she continued.

These efforts support the U.S. Government’s wider goal of helping to stabilize and develop Eastern Sri Lanka so terrorism can never take root in the region again.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided development and humanitarian assistance in developing countries worldwide for nearly 50 years. Since 1946, USAID/Sri Lanka has invested nearly \$2 billion to benefit all the people of Sri Lanka.

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Caption for the attached photo: U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake prepares to lay the first stone at the groundbreaking at Navatkadu Hospital in Batticaloa District. With funding from the U.S. Pacific Command, USAID will also rehabilitate two schools in Batticaloa District and five schools in Trincomalee District. All facilities were seriously damaged by fighting and neglect during the conflict.



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